

[Kalam-e-Arifana - Munshi Raziuddin, Iftekhhar Nizami, Naseerudin Sami, Farid Ayaz](#)

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Postscript (15 Feb 2021): After posting this set of recordings, I came across a cassette of selections of recordings of the Bari Party, from the same period, which contained complete recordings of two tracks from this session: 1) Kalaam of Ahmed-e Jam, “Manzil-e-Ishq Azmakaan-e-Digarast / Kushtagan-e-Khanjar-e-Tasleem ra” and 2) Lay Gayo Pi Piya Paro Humaro Mun. Accordingly, these tracks have replaced the ones posted originally.

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This set of recordings would not have seen the light of day had it not been for one Event and one Person.

The Event was the Covid lockdown, which threatened a miserable time through a dreary, cold, dark winter. To fend off the effects of isolation, sheer boredom and consequent ascent to cloud-cuckoo land, I decided to improve my cooking skills and complete a project to refurbish a pair of old loudspeakers, the latter being something that had been in the planning for the better part of twenty years.



Renovated these Tannoy speakers, manufactured in 1980, which were given new cabinets, three times the size of the originals, as well as new electronics. The result was

the loveliest sounding speakers I have owned and the music they reproduce has helped tide over these days. I am, thoughtfully, providing a picture of the results of my efforts with the speakers J.

Inspired by the music wafting through the apartment, a rare stroke of genius hit me. Looking at a cupboard full of vinyl records and four drawers loaded with tape cassettes, all of which had been untouched for longer than I remember, I decided to pull out all the stuff, clean and sort the LPs and the cassettes and digitize the best of the music accumulated by my father and myself over the past sixty or seventy years. Musical immersion seemed the best antidote to COVID quarantine and all else that poisoned the world in the winter of 2020.

As for the cooking, I don't know whether it improved. You would have to ask my victims.



The Person is my nephew Hasnain, the architect and custodian of this blog who choses to go by the appellation Bohotkhoob. In 2015 I had mentioned, to Hasnain, that I had found a Manzoor Qawwal tape from Abba's drawer of cassettes about 15 years previously, and that it did not seem to be of much consequence. You can see from the sorry state of the cassettes's label in the photo above why I came to this conclusion. Believe me, neither Abba nor I usually treated our music this way, and I have no idea who labelled this cassette thus, although it was kept in its proper place in the order of things.

Once Hasnain knew of the existence of the recording, with the patience and tenacity of a saint — inherited, undoubtedly, from his mother (my cousin) — he kept reminding me to run it and see what we could make of it as a possible post on this blog.

Preoccupations with one thing or another and sheer laziness caused me to avoid this. For five years.

Once my music digitization project got underway I sent Hasnain copies of music from several old vinyl LPs. The man seemed unimpressed and, after receiving a few of these gifts, came back with the retort, “How about the digitization of the tape, which you have been postponing over the last five years, mate?” a thought expressed, of course, in a far more gentle and polite manner. The shame of it all galvanized me to action.

Therein begins the story.

With due remorse I recovered the tape and played it back a bit at a time, lest its age cause it to fall apart altogether. Fortunately, it withstood the rigours of being played through in entirety. As I worked my way in ironing out the few wrinkles in the recording, it dawned upon me that I had discovered a musical gem.

The voices I heard were of Munshi Raziuddin (and not Ustaaad Manzur), at the very peak of his vocal prowess, and his (then) youthful son-in-law and his son, Naseeruddin Saami and Fareed Ayyaz, both vibrant accompanists to Razi Mian. There was a fourth voice that entered intermittently and it sounded distinctly like that of Ustaaad Iftikhar Nizami, a member of the original Bari Party ( بڑی پارٹی ) (the Senior Party) of Manzur Qawwal, that powerhouse of classical Pakistani Qawwali, who we have published as one of the [very earliest of the postings on this blog](#).

Ustaaad Iftikhar Nizami was considered the living library of the enormous poetic repertory of the Bari Party and he was responsible for poetic continuity/prompter as well as one of the principles in the choral ensemble. According to my information, he passed away in 1972. If my reckoning is correct, the presence of Ustaaad Iftikhar dates this recording to between 1969 and early 1972.

The very fact that the tape was labelled as “Manzoor Qawwal” offered another hint as to its origins. Undoubtedly, it was Mr. Assad Ali (host of the 1978 mehfil posted [here](#)) who recorded the cassette and gifted it to Abba. In the Assad Ali household, despite their sustained patronage, Munshi Raziuddin and his group are referred to by the original Bari Party name of Manzoor Qawwal, following the adage, “A Rose by Any Other Name...”

A third clue was the nature of the performance itself. Mr. Assad Ali was a connoisseur of Sufi Poetry, particularly that of Hazrat Ameer Khusro. Hence (in deference to the taste of the audience) the entire Kalaam is recited, rather than chosen couplets, lending an authenticity to each of the pieces presented here. The Qawwals of today tend to flit from one poet or couplet to another, creating a medley of poetry, which is very clever, but

leaves something to be desired in terms of fully enjoying the expression and depth of the original text. The current trend is particularly sad in this case as Munshi Raziuddin possessed a treasure trove of Ameer Khusro's poetry as well as that of innumerable Sufi poets and sages. He could recite the Persian poetry of Khusro and Rumi by the yard, if inspired. It is sad to see that this discipline is not followed by his successors, despite their undoubted brilliance and talent.

The four pieces presented on this posting may well have been extracted as a selection of favourites from a longer mehfil.

So, in summary, this recording is from the collection of Mr. Assad Ali. It dates to between 1970 and 1972, it presents four beautiful recitations and was given by Mr. Assad Ali to my father.

The individual pieces are full of character, not just for the poetry recited but for the distinct emotionality in the recitation of each piece. Every great singer, no matter from where, has the quality of voice, the control over expression and the musical imagination to create a distinct emotional resonance. In those days, Munshi Raziuddin was a master of creating and conveying musical emotion, and hopefully the listener would be able to appreciate the unique mood of each piece.

The first piece, a **Manqabat** devoted to Hazrat Khwaja Ghareeb Nawaz (the Sufi Saint Hazrat Khwaja Mu'eenuddin Chishti), is a supreme example of traditional Khanqahi Qawwali (Qawwali recited at the saint's mausoleum) conveying the plea of a mendicant beseeching the great saint for his blessing, while celebrating his spiritual lineage from The Prophet.

The second, starts from a tentative digression into **Raaga Puriya** but settles into a recitation of the wistful phrase **Lay Gayo Piya Pyaro Hamaro Mun** (loosely translated My beloved you have taken the love possessed by my soul) which presents a beautiful exposition of Raaga Bhairavi.

The third is a personal favourite, a familiar Persian composition of Hazrat Ameer Khusro, **Har Shab Manam Futada**. The intensity of the poetry and majesty of Raaga Darbari serve to transport this listener to another world.

Har shab manam futada, Ba girde sarai e tou  
Har roz ah o nala kunam az barai e tou

Every night have I fallen, around the circle of Thy tavern

every day, do I wail and cry, in yearning of Thee

Jana ba iin shakista dil-bewafa ma shou  
Umre guzasht ta shuda am aashina e tou

O Love, turn not thy gaze from this broken hearted one  
for a lifetime has been spent, in getting to know Thee

Rozay ke zarra zarra shavad, ustakhan-e-man  
Ba shad hanoz dar dil-e-veesham hava e tou

When my bones are nothing but shattered bits  
may my heart carry on its quest of Thee

Bar hal-e-zar-e-man nazar-e-kun ze raahay lutf  
Tu Badshah-e-husni o Khusrau gada e tou

Let thy Grace fall on my blighted self  
Thou art the Lord of Grace, and Khosro but a beggar of Thee

~ Amir Khusrau

(Farsi to English translation by Farrokh Namazi. Text and translation taken from the [blog](#)  
of my dear friend, Arif Ali Khan.)

The last piece, **Manzil-e Ishq az Makan-e Deegar-ast (Kushtagaan-e Khangar-e Tasleem Ra)**, is a poem by Ahmed-e Jam, a Persian mystic:

منزلِ عشق از مکانِ دیگرست  
مرد معنی را نشانِ دیگرست

...

کشتگانِ خنجرِ تسلیم را  
بر زمان از غیب جانِ دیگرست

...

As recorded in Regula Burckhardt Qureshi's "Sufi Music":

The following famous couplet by the Persian mystic Ahmad Jam inspired the saint to ecstasy:

Khushtagan-e-khanjar-e-taslim ra  
Har zaman az ghaib jan-e-digar ast

For the martyrs of the dagger of submission  
The Unseen brings a new life every moment

As the Qawwals repeated every first line, the saint fell down dead, but on every second line, he rose to life again. This alternation continued for many hours to several days, but the singing could not stop, until finally the Sufis present had the performers end on the first line to allow the saint to rest in final union with his Beloved.

— *Regula Burckhardt Qureshi. Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1986.*

The anecdote refers to the departure, from his temporal abode, of the Sufi Saint, Hazrat Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki (1173-1235), who was from the Chishtia Silsila, the successor to Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti, and who was succeeded by Hazrat Fareedudin Ganj i Shakar. The mystic's elevation to the state of haal or wajd (state of ecstasy) dissolves the boundaries between temporal and spiritual existence and allow the Saint to move between the two planes, until the end of the recitation enable the passage of his soul to eternity and unity with his beloved, the Creator.

This anecdote represents essential Sufi ethos, the attainment of seamless transition between the perceivable, tangible world and the world of the soul and spirit—the movement between the Hazir (outer, evident, perceivable) and Batin (inner, deeper, concealed) states of being.

Munshi Raziuddin would, at times, tell me anecdotes of his own mystical experiences. Most of them defied credibility and my queries as to the truth of the story would be met with a characteristic half smile and an affectionate twinkle of the eye. There was no attempt to convince me, just a recollection of the event.

One such anecdote comes to mind, from Munshi Raziuddin's youth in Hyderabad Deccan. From a very early age his thirst for knowledge drew him to the public library of the Nizam of Hyderabad, one of the largest and most beautiful libraries in India. This library had an extensive reference section where readers could reserve a manuscript and peruse it in the reading rooms. Naturally, these could not be taken from the

reference library premises. Once, Razi Mian saw a venerable old gentleman reading a weighty manuscript in an indecipherable script. He was wonderstruck as he saw this person week after week, absorbed in the strange book. One day, out of a combination of mischievousness and curiosity, he managed to reserve the manuscript for the following week.

On the allocated day, he took delivery of the manuscript, settled in at the reading room and proceeded to leaf through it and try to make sense of the script. The mischievousness melted as the old gentleman eventually came around and found this youth pouring over what was HIS book of interest.

“Kuchch samajh main aa raha hai kay kya parh rahay ho? (Are you able to understand what you are reading?)”, he asked with a rather irritated and formidable imperiousness.

Razi Mian, at a loss for words, ceded the manuscript to the gentleman, with the confession that he did not understand a thing.

“Tau phir apna or maira waqt kyun zaya kar rahay ho? (Then why are you wasting your time and mine?)”

However, neither the admonition nor the personality could dull Razi Mian’s curiosity, and he kept eyeing the gentleman absorbed in his reading. Eventually (perhaps out of pity) the gentleman took Razi Mian aside and told him that the manuscript was the Torah, a source of jurisprudence for the Abrahamic faiths, and that the script was classical Hebrew.

The gentleman and Razi Mian struck up an acquaintance, and in response to Razi Mian’s repeated requests, he agreed to instruct Razi Mian on the Hebraic script as well as the mysteries of the manuscript. He told Razi Mian to meet him in the city, at an appointed location, day and time. To Razi Mian’s wonder, the gentleman came to their instructional session with the very same copy of the Torah which, as I earlier mentioned, was not supposed to be removed from the library’s reference section. He was too awestruck by the elder’s presence to inquire as to how he managed to smuggle the book from the library. As things evolved, these instructional sessions became weekly events, at the appointed place, day and time. The reference manuscript and a Hebrew/Arabic alphabet primer were the two books used.

And so it came to pass that Razi Mian gained a working knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet and of the contents of the Torah. Eventually after a few months of this instruction it seems that the old sage did not arrive for his appointment and there was

no sign of him. After a couple of such broken appointments and out of concern for the gentleman's welfare, Razi Mian went to the library with the hope of tracking him down. He described the person and the entire proceeding to the head librarian.

He was informed that the personality he described was a well-known mystic, and that the gentleman had frequented the library for years. However, the sage had passed away a decade ago. Furthermore, Razi Mian was assured that the manuscript had not left its locked cabinet ever since he had booked it several months previously...

Now you can come up with several reasonable questions/speculation etc. as to the credibility of this story and several others. My point in relating this is not to convince anyone about anything. It is to draw attention to the intertwining of the mystical dimension that lends so much flavour to the life and personality of the person of whom we speak. To me it was the telling of the story, the vividness of the imagery and the magic associated with it, that created an aura that makes his art more than the sensory musical experience.

In any case, myths, legends, speculation on the supernatural create a sense of another level of being going beyond austere logic. Much as myths legends and beliefs have been the cause for conflict and bloodshed, they have also embellished life. As, Joseph Campbell, one of the greatest students of Myths observed:

“Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth — penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words. Beyond images, beyond that bounding rim of the Buddhist Wheel of Becoming. Mythology pitches the mind beyond that rim, to what can be known but not told.”

Whatever your thoughts on the matter, Dear Reader, I do hope that you enjoy this musical discovery with or without its mythical colouration. — **Asif Mamu**

Playlist:

1. Manqabat Hazrat Khwaja Ghareeb Nawaz - Ya Waqif-e-Raaz Khafi-o-Jali (یا واقف راز (خفی و جلی ، سلطان الہند غریب نواز)
2. Mai Ree (Raag Puriya)
3. Le Gayo Piya Pyaro Hamaro Mun (Raag Bhairavi) - لے گیو پیا پیارو ہمارو من
4. Har Shab Manam Futada (ہر شب منم فتادہ بہ گرد سرای تو) — Kalam-e-Khusrau
5. Kushtagaan-e-Khanjar-e-Tasleem Ra (کشتگانِ خنجرِ تسلیم را) — Kalam Ahmed-e Jam

Posted by [bohokhoob](#) at [12:58 PM](#)